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THE GULL



GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER VOL. 88 NO. 10 DECEMBER 2003

FOUNDED 1917

Christmas Bird Counts Coming Up Soon

CALIFORNIA
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Golden Gate Audubon Society is gearing up for its annual Christmas Bird Counts in Oakland on Sunday, December 14th and in San Francisco on Tuesday, December 30th. Join us for these fun-filled, healthy, outdoor events.

Sponsored by the National Audubon Society for the past 103 years, Christmas Bird Counts attempt to identify and count bird species within a defined 15-mile diameter circle during one calendar day. Last year, more than 1,800 counts were held nationwide, including over 100 in California alone, with more than 50,000 participants. The results of all counts since 1900 are now readily accessible on the internet at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/, providing a wealth of information on the changes in bird populations for use by researchers as well as amateur birders.

The Oakland count extends in a circle from Treasure Island northeast to the San Pablo Reservoir in Contra Costa, and south to St. Mary's College in Moraga and the Oakland International Airport. With its wide variety of habitats, the Oakland count typically produces more than 170 bird species.

The San Francisco count covers a circle from the north tower of the Golden Gate Bridge through San Francisco and down the Peninsula, including San Bruno Mountain, east to the Bay wetlands north of San Francisco International Airport. Also boasting a wide range of habitats, San Francisco typically provides over 160 species. Both counts have ranked among the top 25 nationwide in terms of number of species found.

The key to finding a large number of species, of course, is having a large number of observers. Both counts welcome new participants—including beginners! Participants can count birds from dawn to dusk—and longer if you want to look for owls. If time is limited,



Great Horned Owl

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

BIRD COUNTS, continued on page 12

Bay Wildlife Future May Hinge on Suit

Ever since California voters defeated the Peripheral Canal (a second conduit for taking water from Northern to Southern California) in 1980, there has been a steadily growing recognition that California does not have enough water to satisfy the state's growing population.

Increased diversions of fresh water from the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers have also had a major impact on the health of several fish species that were once prevalent in San Francisco Bay and Estuary. Due in part to water diversions, some populations of salmon and other fish species have declined and have now been listed as threatened or endangered.

A study performed for Golden Gate Audubon in the late 1980s revealed that as Suisun Bay became increasingly salty due to increased water diversions, many species of ducks, mammals (such as river otters, mink and beaver), and plants would be significantly affected—and might even disappear altogether. Other studies indicated that these fresh water diversions could have far-reaching effects on the entire San Francisco Estuary.

In the mid-1990s, Golden Gate Audubon was the lead plaintiff, joined by a host of other environmental organizations, in a series of lawsuits against the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the California State Water Resources Control Board over decisions these agencies made to allow a greater diversion of water from the San Francisco Bay and Delta.

LAWSUIT, continued on page 12

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Conservation: Jacqui Smalley* 510.655.0998
Education: Allan Ridley
FAWR: Leora Feeney 510.522.8525
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Publications/Publicity: Marjorie Blackwell*
 *Board of Directors '04

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRD BOX
 415.681.7422

OBSERVATIONS

Bruce Mast bmast@alumni.rice.edu

GGAS WEBMASTER

Tomas Latham webmaster@goldengateaudubon.org

EDITOR

Eva Guralnick 415.282.4441
 eva@egcommunications.com

COPY EDITOR

Marjorie Blackwell

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Elizabeth Murdock 510.843.9912

CONSERVATION/EDUCATION DIRECTOR

Arthur Feinstein 510.843.6551

EDUCATION COORDINATOR

Amiko Mayeno 510.635.5533

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Kathryn Blake 510.843.2222

The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 15, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Society membership is \$20 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. Monthly meeting: second Friday in the West Bay; third Thursday in the East Bay, 7:00 p.m.

The Gull is published each month except July and August by the Golden Gate Audubon Society. Special third-class postage paid in Oakland, CA. Send address changes to office promptly. The Post Office does not forward *The Gull*. Single issues are \$2.00.

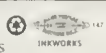
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Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc.
 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G
 Berkeley, CA 94702

Phone: 510.843.2222 • Fax: 510.843.5351
 www.goldengateaudubon.org
 ggass@goldengateaudubon.org

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A Word from Our Treasurer



Most articles in *The Gull* focus on our environmental conservation, education and recreation activities and feature birds and other wildlife as the star attractions. Little mention is made of the financial health of Golden Gate Audubon Society.

In this issue, we are pleased to provide our chapter's basic financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2003 (see page 11). Golden Gate Audubon has accumulated approximately \$564,000 in net assets since its inception in 1917. We follow sound budgeting practices to sustain our important, ongoing programs and to initiate new ones. Our accumulated net assets also help us to cover unanticipated costs when important ecological or conservation issues emerge on short notice and require our immediate attention and involvement.

For the year ended June 30, 2003, 74 percent of expenditures were for education and conservation programs and 11 percent for member services, including publication of *The Gull*. Only 15 percent of our expenditures were allocated to management, general operations and fundraising expenses—a modest percentage in comparison with many other non-profits. We are a lean, volunteer-driven membership organization.

Golden Gate Audubon is dependent on the continued participation and financial support of our members. Gifts, donations and membership dues for the year amount to over half of our revenue. We could not sustain our programs and activities without your membership and volunteer efforts.

As we enter our 87th year, Golden Gate Audubon remains a leading wildlife conservation and education organization in the San Francisco Bay Area. We thank you for your support in establishing this conservation legacy, and we look forward to building together on our accomplishments.

by Al Peters
 Treasurer

Bylaws Revisions and the 2004 Golden Gate Audubon Election

In order to keep pace with changing times and meet our current needs, the Golden Gate Audubon bylaws—our chapter's governing rules—need substantial updating, and a revised set of bylaws may soon be presented to chapter members for approval. If the proposed changes are approved by our Board this fall, a request for members to approve the revised bylaws will be in the January 2004 issue of *The Gull*, with a ballot to be returned near the end of January.

The Golden Gate Audubon bylaws govern the election of board directors and specify nomination and election procedures. Some of the bylaw changes we are considering would affect the election of board directors, and if the changes are approved by Golden Gate Audubon members in January, they will govern the spring 2004 election of directors.

Because of these potential changes, the Golden Gate Audubon Board has not yet set complete dates for the 2004 nomination and election schedule. To begin, however, we have set February 19, 2004 as the deadline to receive nominations by chapter members for open positions on the Board. Following that, the Board's nominating committee will present its nominations for open positions, notify the membership of all candidates, and schedule the election, probably by written ballot to be returned before the annual meeting in May or June.

Look for a revised set of bylaws in the January *Gull* and, in any event, an update on the 2004 election. And please suggest candidates to be nominated for the Board of Directors. Submit your recommendations to Miles McKey, Golden Gate Audubon President, or to a member of the nominating committee (Elizabeth Murdock, Arthur Feinstein, Jacqui Smalley, and Nancy Smith) in care of the Golden Gate Audubon office.

Golden Gate Audubon Wins State Grant for Education Program

The California State Coastal Conservancy is supporting Golden Gate Audubon's Martin Luther King, Jr. Environmental Education Program for the second year in a row.

Funds from the Coastal Conservancy grant are being used to restore the Martin Luther King, Jr. Shoreline in Oakland. Students from local elementary and high schools in East Oakland will help remove exotic invasive plants, clean up trash and replant native vegetation along the mouth of Elmhurst Creek near Arrowhead Marsh. The students also participate in other hands-on learning, including testing water quality in the Bay and identifying birds in order to study total ecosystem health.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. wetland complex, where Golden Gate Audubon focuses its education and restoration efforts, hosts one of the most significant shorebird and waterfowl populations in the Central Bay—perhaps the largest concentration of these birds after the Emeryville Crescent and the Albany mudflats.

Thousands of shorebirds and waterfowl can be found in these wetlands during the appropriate seasons. In addition, the area supports approximately 5 percent of the world's existing Clapper Rail population. Endangered California Least Terns also feed in the waters around the complex.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Shoreline is one of the few examples of a successfully re-



stored wetland complex that is meeting or exceeding all of its goals for restoration. It has become a model for wetland restoration Bay-wide.

Golden Gate Audubon Society expresses its thanks to the State Coastal Conservancy for choosing to support this important program.

Melrose Students Restore Oakland Watershed



Melrose Leadership Academy students picking up trash at their local creek in East Oakland as part of Golden Gate Audubon's environmental education middle school program. This program gives students the opportunity to learn about and invest in protecting their local watershed as well as the birds and other wildlife who inhabit the area. The students also learn about tides, salt and fresh water flows in the Bay and aquatic life in marshlands.

Bay Area Conservation Biology Symposium

The University of California at Davis will host the 6th Annual Bay Area Conservation Biology Symposium on Saturday, January 31, 2004. This student-organized symposium is a forum for sharing recent scientific findings and policy issues related to conservation biology. The conference organizers are accepting abstracts until December 15, and registration for the conference is already open.

Wish List

Golden Gate Audubon is working to develop volunteer opportunities with employees of Bay Area corporations, including Clorox. If you are a Clorox employee and would be interested in helping us develop partnership programs, please contact the Golden Gate Audubon office.

The Man Behind the Web Site

You may not have met Tomas Latham in person, but every time you visit the Golden Gate Audubon website, you see his work. Tomas is the chapter webmaster—otherwise known as the genius behind the scenes—who designed and maintains www.goldengateaudubon.org.

Tomas assumed volunteer responsibility for the website in April 2001. He was initially recruited by Golden Gate Audubon Program Chair Anne McTavish—just to help maintain the site. But Tomas soon found himself running the entire show. After more than a year of sticking primarily to content updates, Tomas decided last year to redesign the look of the website to be more attractive, and he continues to tinker with technical details.

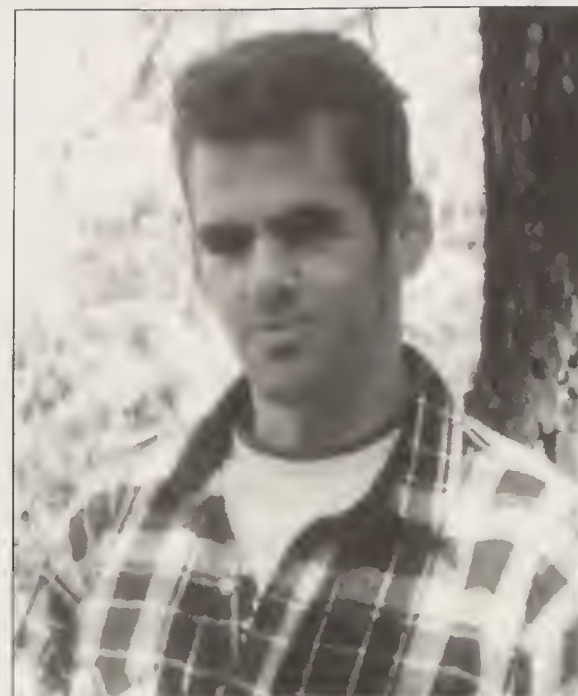
What's most surprising about Tomas is that his web design skills are self-taught. Although he works in a computer-related field, he has had no professional training in web design/architecture. "I wanted to expand my horizons beyond the scope of financial systems, and I was intrigued by the visual component of websites," he says. "So I started reading about what was involved and have been teaching myself ever since." Although he claims not to be a "techie," Tomas definitely speaks the lingo and talks casually about "cross-browser testing," "integrated functionality" and "consistent user interface" to his non-tech listeners, who nod in mystified agreement. It is no easy task to maintain and update Golden Gate Audubon's website, however, even for a dedicated webmaster. Continually posting the latest chapter information and translating *The Gull* every month from a word document into XHTML, while striving to maintain visual appeal, is nearly a full-time job, sometimes requiring Tomas to put in 35 hours a week. This is in addition to his earn-a-living job as a financial analyst.

In addition to being hooked on computer technology, Tomas is an avid bird lover. He has been fascinated by birds since the age of six, when his family lived in Manitoba, Canada. His mother kept a birdfeeder stocked for the flocks of Evening Grosbeaks that visited every day in winter. During the

years his family lived outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Tomas developed a keen interest in building birdhouses and placing them in the woods near his home. "I kept a log for each birdhouse of the nesting materials used, the number of eggs in the clutch, the date of hatching, etc. I was so excited when a pair of Great Crested Flycatchers discovered one of my houses and brought part of a snake skin to claim the site...but the aggressive Starlings soon ran them off."

Today, Tomas has the ideal birdwatching location—the living room and deck of his airy third-floor apartment in San Francisco's Dolores Heights. He barely has to move off his couch or away from his computer desk to observe the Chestnut-backed Chickadees that have nested for four straight years in the customized birdhouse on his deck. Tomas is quite taken by the charm of "his" chickadees and has spent hours videotaping them and digitally recording their calls.

"I'll sit for hours observing the comings and goings of the adults as they set up house and raise their broods," he says. Earlier this year, he also watched in despair as a Scrub Jay swooped in and killed the first fledgling out of the nest. "Every year, from the moment the chickadee eggs hatch, the Scrub Jays harass the adults bringing food, then try to kill the chicks once they fledge. They're relentless."



Tomas Latham.

In the near future, Tomas, working with Golden Gate Audubon's communications team, is planning another overhaul of the Golden Gate Audubon website to make it even easier to use and to provide a more immediate, clearer picture of the scope of Golden Gate Audubon's activities. Anyone interested in helping Tomas and Golden Gate Audubon with this monumental task is invited to contact him. He can be reached at webmaster@goldengateaudubon.org. He would welcome the help!

by Marjorie Blackwell
Publications Chair

Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education and birding activities!

Golden Eagle (\$1000 and more)

Robert L. Bennett & Elizabeth Shih (*Bay-Delta Litigation*), Kathleen Purcell (*SF Nature Education*)

Peregrine Falcon (\$500 to \$1000)

Mara Melandry (*Save the Quail*)

Least Tern (\$200 to \$500)

Marjorie Blackwell

Clapper Rail (\$100 to \$200)

Catherine S. Lyon (*Save the Quail*), Marilyn Nasatir*

Gifts (to \$100)

Andrea Auer, David Baker (*FAWR*), California

Nature Treks*, Reba Davis (*Save the Quail*), Rudolf Glauser, Elizabeth Hook, George Lai (*Save the Quail*), Elizabeth Land (*Save the Quail*), Robert Lewis, Rachel Medanic (*Save the Quail*), Audre Newman (*Latin America Committee*), Eileen Odegard, Shirley J. Ramos (*FAWR*), Alice Ray*, Steve Spellman, John Sudall, Patricia Webster (*SF Nature Education*)

Continuing Monthly Donations (one year or more)

Anne Deleage, Raj & Helen Desai, Carolyn Kolka, Dr. Jessica Krakow

In Memory of

Bob O'Brien: Bob & Hanno Lewis
Edward & Susan deLelle: Winton & Margaret D. McKibben (*Save the Quail*)

Grant

American Bird Conservancy (*Cats Indoors! Program*)

* With Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Membership

Delicious New Benefit for Golden Gate Audubon Volunteers

For Susanne Shields, Golden Gate Audubon's new Hospitality Coordinator, providing tasty, nutritious meals at low cost in a sociable atmosphere "is the best way for Golden Gate Audubon to show its clear appreciation for the volunteers who go out and do all the hard work."

In addition to this proviso, Susanne has set two more goals for Golden Gate Audubon hospitality: 1) support the environment and reduce trash by using a minimum of disposable paper or plastic materials, and 2) create partnerships with other nonprofit organizations. To that end, she already has launched two partnerships: with the Martin de Porres House of Hospitality in San Francisco (where she volunteers) to use their plates, cups and flatware, and with Project Open Hand (where she is employed) to prepare nutritious meals at low cost for Golden Gate Audubon events.

Project Open Hand will provide meals to Golden Gate Audubon at their wholesale price, significantly lower than last year's catered meals. "There will be plenty, and it will be warm and delicious," Susanne promises. "Project Open Hand prepares more than 2,000 meals a day in San Francisco and Oakland," she notes. "We make healthy, fresh meals for HIV patients, as well as other home-bound, critically ill patients and for the 24 locations in San Francisco's senior meal program. We also have a grocery center that distributes groceries to individuals who are ill, but are still able to cook for themselves. Preparing meals for Golden Gate Audubon events will be a great way for each nonprofit to support the other."

Susanne gained her love of cooking and of fresh ingredients the hard way. "As a kid, I was tall, skinny and always hungry," she recalls. "My mother thought the best way to cook was to put everything in a pressure cooker.

She also didn't believe in eating between meals. So I learned to cook out of self-defense. It was also the era of Jacques Pepin and Julia Child on TV. Some days I would cook 10 versions of onion soup just to see how it changed with different kinds of onions, roasted onions, rice as a thickener rather than roux, etc. Then I got to eat them all!"

A native of New York City, Susanne came to the Bay Area to earn a graduate degree in mathematics at the University of California, Berkeley. In her adult life of marriage and raising a family, cooking good food has always been important. "When my kids were little, I baked bread every other day," she says. "Unlike my mother, I fed them on demand, and they still stayed skinny." One of her two daughters clearly caught her mother's fervor; she is a graduate of the California Culinary Academy and a professional chef.

Golden Gate Audubon members who attend the Christmas Bird Count dinners in Oakland and San Francisco will have a

chance to meet Susanne in person and enjoy the fruits (and meat and vegetables) of her labor, as she will be cooking and transporting all the food, setting up the dining rooms and cleaning up. Give a big welcome to Susanne and thank her for taking on the care and feeding of hungry Golden Gate Audubon birders.

by Marjorie Blackwell
Publications Chair



Susanne Shields (right) with her daughter Miriam Wadleigh and granddaughter Megan.

Spring Birding Classes

Evening bird classes taught by Joe Morlan and endorsed by Golden Gate Audubon Society will be starting February 3, 4, and 5, 2004. All classes meet 7-9:15 p.m. in room 307, Marina Middle School, 3500 Fillmore at Bay St. Free parking is in the school lot off Bay St. on the east side of the building.

The instructor is co-author of "Birds of San Francisco and the Bay Area" and "Birds of Northern California." He is also coordinator of the recorded "Northern California Birdbox" sponsored by Golden Gate Audubon Society. Slides illustrate all lectures, and the text for all classes is "A Field Guide to Birds of North America," fourth edition, by the National Geographic Society. "The Sibley Guide to Birds" is recommended as an adjunct text for Ornithology II & III.

Field Ornithology I meets on Tuesdays. It is an introduction to birds and birding, combining basic field skills with the study of bird ecology, biology, evolution and behavior. Part A (EA101) starts February 3 and ends March 16; Part B (EA105) starts March 23 and ends May 18.

Field Ornithology II meets on Wednesdays. It is a continuing in-depth study of the identification and status of North American land birds, including waxwings, warblers, and tanagers. Part A (EA110) starts February 4 and ends March 17; Part B (EA115) starts March 24 and ends May 20.

Field Ornithology III meets on Thursdays. It is a continuing study of North American waterbirds including sandpipers and jaegers. Part A (EA120) starts February 5 and ends March 18; Part B (EA125) starts March 25 and ends May 20.

The instructor may arrange optional field trips on weekends. Please bring binoculars and field guides to class if you have them. Fees are \$115 for each seven-week course. Pre-registration is strongly advised. For further information call 415.561.1860.

FIELD TRIPS

Susan Groves



Birding for Kids at Strybing Arboretum

San Francisco

Saturdays, December 6 and January 3

San Francisco Nature Education Leaders:
Nancy DeStefanis, Angie Geiger,
Scott Walker; Strybing Arboretum Docent:
Darin Dawson
415.876.5220, myblueherons@yahoo.com

9–11 a.m. Meet at the front gate of the Arboretum for this regular first Saturday of the month bird and nature hike. For ages 7 and older. Details in *September Gull*.


Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserves

Monterey County

Saturday, December 3

Leader: Rick Fournier, 831.632.2473,
www.montereybirdingadventures.com

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserves Visitor Center for this regular first Saturday of the month visit. This is one of California's prime birding locations! Great trip for all levels of birders.

From the Bay Area take Hwy. 101 south from San Jose. After the town of San Martin and before Gilroy, exit west on Hwy. 152 going toward Watsonville. From Watsonville, take G12 (Salinas Rd.) south to Elkhorn Road to the Reserve's Visitor's Center. [\$] 

Arrowhead Marsh

Alameda County

Sunday, December 7


GGAS leader: Jeffrey Black
510.526.7068 (no calls after 9 p.m.)



Carpool. If you can share a ride or if you need a ride, call Susan Groves at 510.654.5954.

[\$] **Entrance fee** required.

Meet at 9:15 a.m. for this half day walk, featuring shorebirds, ducks, raptors. Good for beginners. We shall walk about one mile birding the estuary before reaching the marsh. Take I 880 south exiting Hegenberger Rd. Turn right towards Oakland Airport and go about 1/3 mile to a small parking lot on the right just past Leet Dr., and beyond the bridge over the estuary. [\$]

 East Bay Drivers/riders meet at 8:45 at North Berkeley BART station.

Strybing Arboretum

San Francisco

Sunday, December 7 and January 4

GGAS co-leaders: Allan Ridley, Rick Ferrick;
Strybing Arboretum Docents: Linda Lyons,
Helen McKenna. 415.566.3241

Meet at 8 a.m. at the front gate of the Arboretum for this regular first Sunday of the month half-day trip. Details in *September Gull*.


Wednesdays At The Marsh

Arrowhead Marsh, Alameda County

Wednesday, December 10

Leader: Courtenay Peddle, 510.532.8911
(no calls after 9 p.m.), capeddle@there.net

Meet at 9:30 a.m. for a 2 1/2 hour stroll. We should see lots of shorebirds and perhaps Clapper Rail. Bring scope if you have one. All levels of birders welcome.

Take I-880 south to Hegenberger and then west on Hegenberger to Doolittle Drive. Right on Doolittle, right onto Swan Way. Left into MLK park. Drive to end for Arrowhead Marsh parking lot. 

Call Susan Groves, Field Trips Committee Chair, at 510.654.5954:

- if you have difficulty reaching a leader and need information,
- if you have suggestions for trips, or
- if you are interested in leading a trip

Gray Lodge & Sacramento Wildlife Refuges

Sutter, Butte and Glenn Counties

Saturday and Sunday, December 13 & 14

Leaders: Steve and Renee Margolin
530.342.6476

We will be looking for wintering geese (four species), Tundra Swans, a variety of ducks, raptors and Sandhill Cranes. For this two-day trip, meet on Saturday at 9 a.m. in lot #14 at Gray Lodge. We will caravan through Gray Lodge Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, and then visit some other sites in Sutter, Butte and Glenn Counties so make sure you have plenty of gasoline before arriving at Gray Lodge. There is no lodge in Gray Lodge. Bring lunch, snacks, liquids, scopes and clothes appropriate for the Sacramento Valley in December (cold, with wind and rain always possible). Heavy rain cancels trip. You may join us for both days or just one day.

Drive east on I-80 15 miles beyond Davis to Route 99 exit. Go north 52 miles on Route 99 to the town of Gridley. Turn left (west) on Colusa Hwy and continue five miles to Pennington Rd. Turn left and follow signs to Gray Lodge Wildlife Refuge. Proceed through the checking station [\$] and continue to parking lot #14.

On Sunday, we will meet at 9 a.m. in the visitors' parking lot at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge. [\$]

To get there from I-5 take the Princeton exit just north of the Glenn Co. line, and follow signs to the Refuge. Or, take #99 to Live Oak (just south of Gridley). In Live Oak, go west on Pennington Rd. and follow it west and then north to the Gray Lodge entrance. Allow two and one-half hours driving time from the Bay Area. For accommodations, try the Blue Gum Willows Motel or the Best Western in Willows, or Jean's Riverside B & B in Oroville.



Aquatic Park

San Francisco

Sunday, December 28

Leader: SF Maritime National Historical Park Ranger Carol Kiser
415.561.7100 or 561.7104

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the foot of the Hyde Street Pier (Hyde & Jefferson) for this beginners bird walk. Discover birds next door to the urban environment. Approximately two hour walk. Dress in layers. Trip is wheelchair accessible.

Golden Gate Audubon Gift Memberships

This holiday season, give your nature-loving friends a gift they will enjoy the whole year—and which will contribute to local habitat conservation and environmental education!

Through a one-year gift membership to Golden Gate Audubon Society, your friends and family can enjoy 10 issues of *The Gull*, 10 percent off of books, seed and other items at our Nature Store, discounts on select classes, and an invitation to participate in any of our

programs and events. Gift members will receive a holiday letter from Golden Gate Audubon informing them of the membership you have given them and welcoming them to the organization, as well as a special vinyl decal with our gull logo. Gift Memberships are \$20 for one year.

To purchase a gift membership, fill out the form below and return it to our office or call the office during business hours at 510.843.2222.

GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY GIFT MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

GIFT RECIPIENT

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZIP _____

Gift Card to read:

YOUR INFORMATION

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

In addition to your gift membership, please consider making a contribution to Golden Gate Audubon Society. Your contributions provide significant support to our conservation, education and recreation programs.

Membership (\$20) \$ _____

Yes, I also want to donate \$ _____

Total Amount \$ _____

☐ Check enclosed (payable to **Golden Gate Audubon Society**)

☐ Please bill my credit card: ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard

Account # _____ Exp. _____

☐ Please do not give my name or the gift recipient's name to any other organization.

Mail to:

Golden Gate Audubon Society
2530 San Pablo Avenue
Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702

OBSERVATIONS

October 1–31, 2003

Bruce Mast



October brought cool, dry, weather, raging fires in Southern California, the return of winter ducks and sparrows, and some fascinating irruptions of several pinyon/oak/juniper species. True rarities were few, with only one CBRC-review species in the Bay Area. Avid listers were offered the chance to chase a **Bar-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa lapponica*) at Moonglow Dairy in MTY. Unfortunately, some irresponsible birders drove recklessly, had an accident, and jeopardized further access to this site on private property.

Loons to Ducks

Red-necked Grebes returned October, with a flock of 6-8 at Drake's Beach, PRNS, MRN, on Oct. 8th (DWi) and reports of single birds from Hunter's Pt shipyard, SF (JRB); Briones Res, CC (RSc, mob); and the Fish Docks, PRNS, MRN (MD, mob). A Harlequin Duck continued at Coyote Pt Marina (SM), here it has loitered since summer (RST). Two more Harlequins were at Drake's Estero, PRNS, MRN, on Oct. 5th (DWi). On the 26th an observer reported 6 Harlequins winging over Bodega Bay, SON (RS).

Raptors to Alcids

Raptors were on the move in October, with reports of Ferruginous Hawks, Rough-legged Hawks, and the occasional Prairie Falcon. The best bird was the juvenile **Mississippi Kite** (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) which circled Hawk Hill, MRN, for about 5 minutes on Oct. 28th (SB, mob). According to SB, the only other Mississippi Kite record for Hawk Hill is from 1976. Between Oct. 2 and 8, hawk watchers reported a number of Broad-winged Hawks passing through the region, though not quite matching the Corpus Christi, TX, tallies (107,000 on Sept 26!). Single birds flew over Bolinas, MRN (KH), and Hawk Hill (SS) on the 2nd and 4th. The 5th produced multiple bird sightings from PRNS (BEM, LC, DWi), Hawk Hill (mob), and Inspiration Pt, CC, (SG; BB). The final

Broadie was seen over Hayward RS on the 8th (BR).

The sole American Golden-Plover was on Oct. 1st, at Abbott's Lagoon, PRNS, MRN (BH, PW). Pacific Golden-Plovers were reported at Abbott's Lagoon and elsewhere at PRNS (MRN) (DWi, RS) at Bodega Harbor, SON (AW; mob), and at Bahia Lagoon, MRN (BDB). Pectoral Sandpipers were reported at Abbott's Lagoon (PRNS, MRN), (BH, PW); at Palo Alto Baylands, SCL (DaB); in Half Moon Bay, SM (RST); and over the Battery Godfrey overlook, SF (PS). Sharp-tailed Sandpiper joined 2 Pectorals at Palo Alto Baylands on Oct. 5 (DaB). Two Rock Sandpipers wandered south to Pigeon Pt Lighthouse, SM on Oct. 11th (RST). A Stilt Sandpiper was spotted in the wetlands near Alviso, SCL, on Oct. 4th and 25th (DWe, LC, mob). On the 6th, a Stilt turned up at the SON Baylands Coastal Conservancy project, SON (RS). More than 60 Red Phalaropes were reported at on-shore locations throughout the month, including Abbott's Lagoon, PRNS, MRN, (DWi, DR); L Merced, SF (SJD); Las Gallinas Sewage ponds, MRN (DR); Año Nuevo SR, SM (PM); Moss Beach, SM (RST); Pigeon Pt, SM (RST); Pescadero, SM (KO); Bodega Bay, SON, on (RS, LH); and L Merced, SF (JW). Two juvenile Sabine's Gulls continued near Coyote Pt. Marina, SM, through Oct. 3rd (RST).

Doves to Thrashers

Burrowing Owls started showing up again on reports from Hayward RS, ALA (BR); Bodega Head Rd, SON (ADM); PRNS, MRN (RS); Bayfront Park in Menlo Park, SM (JuD, BE, KO); and Alviso, SCL (LC, mob). In MRN, a Spotted Owl spent Oct. 5th perched on a rail at Hawk Hill (NW, DB, PB, mob). A

Short-eared Owl returned to hunt over Hayward RS, ALA, on the 25th (ESe). A rare fall transient, a Lesser Nighthawk was observed over Bolinas, MRN, on Oct. 21st (KH). A bright male Costa's Hummingbird foraged in GGP, SF, on the 1st (BHa) and the Stinson Beach Costa's continued through the 5th (KH; LL; CL, GG).

The September irruption of Lewis's Woodpeckers continued in October, with small flocks, totaling more than 40 birds, passing over Inspiration Pt (Tilden RP, CC) (SG; BB); Sibley RP, CC (JL); Skyline Open Space Preserve and Alpine Pond, (SM/SCL) (RST; mob); and San Antonio Valley Rd, SCL (MiR). Irruption observers also commented on the striking numbers of Acorn Woodpeck-



Bar-tailed Godwit.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

ers on the move. Completing the woodpecker report, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker visited Hayward RS, ALA, on Oct. 8th (BR).

October's only Empids were a late Hammond's Flycatcher at the PRNS Lighthouse, MRN, on the 4th (LC; mob) and a Dusky Flycatcher near the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, SM, on the 24th (RST). Instead, we saw an influx of Tropical Kingbirds, with 4 reports from MRN (WL, RS, RH, KH), 3 from SM (RS, JM, RF, RST, PM), and 1 each from SON (ADM) and SF (ASH, mob). The Farallon Is (SF) hosted a Northern Shrike on the 15th (PP). A brightly plumaged Philadelphia Vireo lingered at Pine Gulch Cr, MRN, Oct. 2-5 (KH; RS; LL, CL, GG).

October produced a Pinyon Jay irruption that rivaled the Lewis's Woodpeckers. Primarily inhabitants of the Pinyon-Juniper forests of the Eastern Sierras, two Pinyons first turned up on the 7th near the junction

of Skyline and Alpine Rds, near the SM/SCL county line (ADM). Another bird turned up the next day in nearby Butano SP, SM (DLS). That same day, a Pinyon Jay flew over Sibley Volcanic RP, CC (JL), a first County record (fide SG). At Redwood RP, ALA, a Pinyon was noted on the 15th (BR), representing just the second County record, the first being a flock of 75 birds that flew over the UC Berkeley Campus on Oct. 5th, 1911 (fide SG). In SCL, an observer found a Pinyon Jay in San Antonio Valley on the 10th (MOB). According to JY, the pinyon nut crops have been meager to absent this year in the wake of several years of serious drought. On Oct. 18th, a Sage Thrasher showed up in an agricultural field near Año Nuevo SR (RST). Even more remarkable, a Brown Thrasher lingered at a Corte Madre, MRN, birdbath from the 19th to the 25th (NW).

Wood Warblers to Finches

The late September movement of Red-throated Pipits tapered off in early October, with reports only from Bodega Bay, SON, on the 4th (RS) and from the SON Baylands Coastal Conservancy project, SON, on the 6th (RS). Warbler migration also slowed, with the most remarkable activity being the number of Palm Warbler reports-23 in all (see Warbler Tables). The first Summer Tanager of the winter was reported from Corte Madre, MRN, on Oct. 1 (NW).

Turning to the Emberizinae, a Green-tailed Towhee was found Oct. 1 at Nunez (A) Ranch, PRNS, MRN, where it stayed until the 4th (KB; mob). Our most remarkable sparrow was an American Tree Sparrow on the 21st, which apparently mistook the Nunes (A) Ranch at PRNS (MRN) for the northern plains (RS). Five Clay-colored Sparrows and 2 Brewer's Sparrows were reported, all from the SM coast (AWi, RST, JM). A Vesper Sparrow joined the White-crowns at Crissy Fields, SF, on the 13th (ASH) and 2 more turned up near Pigeon Pt, SM on the 18th (RST). A Gray-headed Junco delighted the Oct. 26 SCL Audubon trip to the Presidio, SF (ASH, mob). A handful of Chestnut-collared Longspurs returned to their wintering grounds at Hayward RS, ALA, on the 19th, where they remained in the company of Horned Larks (BR; mob). On the

Wood Warbler Sightings

Tennessee Warbler			10/12,14 Rodeo Lagoon, MRN	WL; JR
10/1	Nunez (A) Ranch, PRNS, MRN	KB	(3 birds)	
10/1	Fish Docks, PRNS, MRN	BH, PW, KB	10/12 Año Nuevo SR, SM	RS; JM, RF
			10/13-17 Farallon Is, SF	PP
			10/14 Redwood Shores, SM	RST
			10/17 Half Moon Bay, SM	RST
			10/17-19 Lighthouse, PRNS, MRN	RS; mob
			10/18-19 Fish Docks, PRNS, MRN	DVP; mob
			(4 birds)	
			10/18 Año Nuevo SR, SM	RST
			10/21 Nunes (A) Ranch, PRNS, MRN	RS
			10/25 Candlestick Pt, SF	ASH
			10/31 Pacifica, SM	RF
Chestnut-sided Warbler				
10/1-4	Mendoza (B) Ranch, PRNS, MRN	mob		
10/4	Stinson Beach, MRN	LL; mob		
10/11	Rodeo Lagoon	JR; mob		
Magnolia Warbler				
10/3-5	RCA Station, PRNS, MRN	RS; mob		
10/5-7	Presidio, SF	ASH; JC		
10/17	Lighthouse, PRNS, MRN	RS		
Black-throated Blue Warbler				
10/13-17	Farallon Is, SF	PP		
Palm Warbler				
10/1-8	Fish Docks, PRNS, MRN	mob		
10/3	L Merced, SF	DA		
10/4	Inspiration Pt, Tilden RP, CC	BB		
10/6	Sutro Heights Park, SF	MU		
10/7	Crissy Fields Lagoon, SF	DA		
10/7	Presidio, SF	JC, DA		
10/9,14	Drake's Beach, PRNS, MRN	SA; RS		
Blackpoll Warbler				
10/1	Mendoza (B) Ranch, PRNS, MRN	BH, PW		
10/2	Redwood Cr, MRN	DMK		
Black-and-white Warbler				
10/4	Pillar Pt Harbor, SM	AWi		
10/26	Crissy Field, SF	ASH		
American Redstart				
10/11	Pescadero Cr, SM	RST		
Yellow-breasted Chat				
10/2	Pacific Way, MRN	DMK		

Abbreviations for Observers: DA, David Armstrong; SA, Steve Abbott; BB, Bob Battagin; BDB, Bruce D. Bajema; DB, Dennis Braddy; DaB, Daniel Bump; JRB, J.R. Blair; KB, Ken Burton; PB, Patricia Braddy; SB, Steve Bauer; HC, Hugh Cotter; JC, Josiah Clark; LC, Les Chibana; NC, Nancy Conzett; ADM, Al DeMartini; GD, Gary Deghi; JD, Jim Danzenbaker; JuD, Judith Dean; MD, Matthew Dodder; PD, Peter Dramer; SJD, Stephen J. Davies; AE, Al Eisner; BE, Ben Encisco; BF, Brian Fitch; MF, Mike Feighner; PF, Pierre Fraleaf; RF, Rich Ferrick; RFi, Robbie Fischer; GG, George Griffith; SG, Steve Glover; ASH, Alan Hopkins; BH, Bob Hirt; BHa, Bob Hall; KH, Keith Hansen; LH, Lisa Hug; RH, Roger Harshaw; SH, Steve Huckabone; AJ, Alvaro Jaramillo; CL, Cindy Lieurance; CDL, Calvin Lou; DL, Don Lewis; JL, John Luther; LL, Les Lieurance; RL, Robin Leong; RaL, Randy Little; SLB, Susie LeBaron; WL, William Legge; BEM, Bruce Mast; DM, Dan Murphy; JM, Joe Morlan; DMK, Dave McKenzie; KMK, Kevin McKereghan; PM, Peter Metropulos; BO, Bob Ovang; KO, Kris Olson; MOB, Matthew O'Brien; BP, Bob Power; JP, John Poole; PP, Peter Pyle; BR, Bob Richmond; DR, Don Reinberg; JR, Jean Richmond; MR, Mark Rauzon; MiR, Mike Rogers; DLS, David L. Suddjian; DSi, Dan Singer; ES, Emilie Strauss; ESe, Emily Serkin; PS, Paul Saraceni; RS, Rich Stallcup; RSc, Rusty Scalf; SS, Sam Stuart; RST, Ron Thorn; MU, Myra Ulvang; DVP, David Vander Pluym; MVT, Mary Van Toska; AW, Alan Wight; AWi, Adam Winer; DW, Denise Wight; DWi, Dave Weber; DWi, Dave Wimpfheimer; JW, Jeff Wall; NW, Nick Whelan; PW, Peter White; JY, James Yurchenco; MZ, Matt Zlatunich

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation "mob" = many observers; "oob" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listserve; the author apologizes for any errors or omissions.

Abbreviations for Counties and Others: ALA, Alameda; BBA, Breeding Bird Atlas; CBC, Christmas Bird Count; CC, Contra Costa; Cr, Creek; Cyn, Canyon; GGP, Golden Gate Park; Is, Island; L, Lake; MRN, Marin; MTY, Monterey; N., North; NAP, Napa; Pt, Point; PRNS, Point Reyes National Seashore; PT, Pelagic Trip; RP, Regional Park; Rd, Road; Res, Reservoir; RS, Regional Shoreline; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park; SR, State Reserve

29th they were joined by a Lapland Longspur (BR, PD). Chestnut-collared Longspurs were also reported from PRNS, MRN, on the 17th and 18th (RS; DVP) and at Coyote Pt. Yacht Club, SM, on the 27th (RST). On Oct. 5th, the juvenile male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was seen again at a feeder in Corte Madera, MRN, where it was present since Sept. 20 (NW). An Indigo Bunting joined Clay-colored and Brewer's Sparrows in a mixed flock near Año Nuevo SR, SM, on Oct. 18th (RST). The SM coast also pro-

duced 2 Dickcissel reports on the 22nd and 24th (RaL, AJ). October brought us several unusual icterids, starting with a Bobolink at Olema Marsh, MRN, on the 25th (MD, mob). On Oct. 9th and 25th, a female Rusty Blackbird joined a large mixed flock behind the Nunes (A) Ranch, PRNS (SA, MD; mob). Also at PRNS, birders found an Orchard Oriole at the Fish Docks on the 2nd (PF). Orchard Orioles were reported on the 5th in Moss Beach, SM (RST) and in Lincoln Park, SF (ASH).

BACKYARD BIRDER

Meg Pauletich



The wildfires in Southern California were not only devastating in human terms but also affected huge numbers of wildlife. Birds may seem to have the advantage of flight, but quail and other ground-dwellers can't run or fly fast enough to evade the horrible speed of those explosive fires.

One bird species particularly at risk because of the fires—primarily the San Diego County fires—is the California Gnatcatcher. Several years ago, this bird was believed to be a race or subspecies of the Black-tailed Gnatcatcher. Now it is considered a separate species and is found only in southwestern California and Baja California.

Scientists use different data to distinguish species from one another. The obvious way to classify species is by measuring characteristics of a bird's form or appearance. This morphological data includes, for example, the color of plumage or the shape of the skeleton or other anatomical structures. In the early years of classifying species, this type of data was the only means available to early taxonomists.

Highly improved optics have made it easier to observe, characterize and quantify behavioral data typical of a species. Information such as display movements, nest structure, and breeding systems help to separate even the most similar species. There is very little to distinguish the Black-tailed and the California Gnatcatchers. Physically, the California is dull gray below and has less white on the underside of the tail. The fairly recent advent of biochemical data now gives researchers genetic information to help them distinguish between closely related species.

The California Gnatcatcher is found only in a very limited habitat of coastal scrub or chaparral. Because of their small population, breeding pairs are carefully monitored by scientists. It will be interesting to see what transpires with this small bird in the wake of the recent fires. Where did they take refuge? Were they able to escape the fury of the fires?

Will the habitat that is left or that revives be able to support them?

Four gnatcatchers breed in North America along with a cousin, the Arctic Warbler. The Blue-grey Gnatcatchers resemble miniature Northern Mockingbirds with their long tails cocked high above their backs, sharp black bill and white outer tail feathers, which they frequently flare, hoping to flush insects out



Black-tailed Gnatcatcher

of hiding. They also have a mocker's warbling song, which includes a few notes from other species.

Gnatcatchers form monogamous pair bonds and the male and female maintain close contact either visually or vocally as they scour the tips of branches for insects and spiders. Once the pair has shared the building of their tiny, tightly compact, cup-shaped nest made of bark strips and plant fibers, the female lays

two to six eggs, one each morning.

The female has an incubation patch, yet the male helps with the incubation for 11 to 15 days. The young are fed by both parents until they fledge 10 to 15 days later. Parents feed the fledglings for another three weeks, unless the parents decide to have another brood. In that case, the kiddies have to fend for themselves after 18 days.

Wonderful recyclers, gnatcatchers reuse the nesting materials from the carefully constructed first nest. If that nest has been infested with parasites such as fleas or mites, however, the nest is not recycled. The first nest is built by the pair and takes about two weeks to construct. The second nest is built by the male only and takes less than a week using the recyclables.

In southern Arizona, you might see both the Black-tailed Gnatcatcher as well as a visitor from Mexico, the Black-capped Gnatcatcher.

Until humans intervened and suppressed natural fires, burning was a vital part of nature's cycles. Out of such a nightmare comes some good. There are pine seeds which only are released from their cones under the extreme heat of fire. Also, the ash and burned materials amend the soil. Many plants thrive after the first rains and feed the surviving animals. Time heals the earth. These fires would not have spread so far and had so much fuel if human actions had not altered natural fire patterns.

We are fortunate to live so close to nature here in California. But we mustn't forget the dangers involved. We can but hope that the tiny California Gnatcatcher hasn't paid the ultimate price for being part of our populated, yet wonderful landscape.

Part-time Position in Golden Gate Audubon Office

Golden Gate Audubon is seeking a part-time office assistant to work 12 hours a week, beginning in February 2004. Duties include assisting with member outreach, answering phones, responding to email, and managing our nature store. Facility with Excel is required; knowledge of computer databases and Quickbooks a plus.

Please call the Golden Gate Audubon office at 510.843.2222 for more information.

GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Balance Sheets June 30, 2003 and 2002

				2003	2002
	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED	COMBINED TOTAL	COMBINED TOTAL
ASSETS					
Current Assets					
Cash And Cash Equivalents (Note 3)	\$ 35,011			\$ 35,011	\$ 55,632
Other Receivables	18,027			18,027	2,276
Inventory	2,372			2,372	1,920
Investments (Note 4) (At Fair Value)	344,738	\$ 116,300	\$ 55,224	516,262	527,909
Deposits	522	—	—	522	360
Total Current Assets	400,670	116,300	55,224	572,194	588,097
Property and Equipment, Net (Note 5)	—	—	—	—	—
Total Assets	\$ 400,670	\$ 116,300	\$ 55,224	\$ 572,194	\$ 588,097
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS					
Current Liabilities					
Accounts Payable	\$ 7,000			\$ 7,000	\$ 8,325
Payroll And Sales					
Taxes Payable	904			904	1,775
Total Current Liabilities	7,904			7,904	10,100
Net Assets	392,766	\$ 116,300	\$ 55,224	564,290	577,997
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 400,670	\$ 116,300	\$ 55,224	\$ 572,194	\$ 588,097

Statements of Activities and Changes in Net Assets June 30, 2003 and 2002

				2003	2002
	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED	COMBINED TOTAL	COMBINED TOTAL
SUPPORT AND REVENUE					
Public Support					
Direct Contributions					
Gifts And Donations	\$ 93,464	\$ 72,524		\$ 165,988	\$ 93,780
Grants	125,854	27,546	\$ —	153,400	147,163
Total Direct Contributions	219,318	100,070	—	319,388	240,943
Indirect Contributions					
Earth Share	3,589	—	—	3,589	4,750
Total Public Support	222,907	100,070	—	322,977	245,693
REVENUE					
Membership Dues	22,350			22,350	22,716
Investment Earnings (Loss), Net (Note 4)	10,802			10,802	(79,755)
Merchandise Sales (Net Of Direct Expenses of \$6,890 In 2003 And \$6,399 In 2002)	4,995			4,995	4,475
Other	547	—	—	547	20,175
Total Revenue	38,694	—	—	38,694	(32,389)
Total Public Support and Revenue	261,601	100,070	—	361,671	213,304
Net Assets Released from Restriction	243,314	(230,761)	(12,553)	—	—
FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES					
Program Services:					
Educational Programs	144,374			144,374	238,587
Conservation	118,284			118,284	106,346
Member Services	40,966			40,966	32,748
Grants Made	15,500			15,500	—
Management And General	48,100			48,100	39,174
Fundraising	8,154	—	—	8,154	8,247
Total Expenses	375,378	—	—	375,378	425,102
Change in Net Assets	129,537	(130,691)	(12,553)	(13,707)	(211,798)
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	263,229	246,991	67,777	577,997	789,795
Net Assets at End of Year	\$ 392,766	\$ 116,300	\$ 55,224	\$ 564,290	\$ 577,997

Complete Golden Gate Audubon Society audited financial statements are available for inspection at our office or by mail upon request.

BIRD COUNTS, continued from page 1

observers can spend a half-hour or a few hours in a neighborhood park or near their workplace, tallying the birds in nearby areas. Feeder watchers who bird from home are also wanted; some species are often easier to find this way. Observers are assigned to an area suited to their interests and are assisted by an experienced leader. The Christmas Bird Count is a popular tradition at Golden Gate Audubon: Oakland typically attracts 150 or more field observers and San Francisco, 80 or more.

Both bird counts finish the day with a festive, group dinner, which everyone is encouraged to attend. The dinners are a wonderful way to share field stories, tally final counts of birds seen and missed, and exchange information on rare birds and their locations. This year, GGAS' new hospitality chair, Susanne Shields, is planning and arranging the dinners, which will include plenty of good, hot, nutritious food. Susanne has created exciting new partnerships with two other Bay Area non-profit organizations: Martin de

Porres House of Hospitality, which will provide non-disposable dinnerware, and Project Open Hand, which will prepare the meals.

How to Help

It's not too late to sign up for the Christmas Bird Counts! For Oakland, call Dave Quady 510.704.9353 or Bob Lewis 510.845.5001. For San Francisco, call Alan Hopkins 415.664.0983. Please call the Golden Gate Audubon office if you have questions. We look forward to counting with you in December!

LAWSUIT, continued from page 1

As a result of our actions, the EPA set standards for San Francisco Bay that included requiring enough fresh water to be released into the Estuary to support a doubling of salmon populations. This increase would also benefit all species dependent upon fresh water flows into the estuary.

On December 29, 1999, however, the State Water Resources Control Board adopted a set of standards for fresh water flows into the es-

tuary that ignored the EPA standard of doubling the salmon population. In response to this action, Golden Gate Audubon filed suit against the state to enforce the EPA standards.

In April 2003, the state court rejected our suit. This was not unanticipated, as the court, located in the Central Valley, is not known for its environmental sensitivity. Our options were to walk away or continue to fight the excessive water diversions that now threaten

the health of San Francisco Bay and its wildlife. Golden Gate Audubon has chosen to appeal the court's decision in the hopes of compelling the state agencies to meet the federal requirements.

The future of the Bay may well rest on this legal effort. We will keep you updated as our efforts continue.

By Arthur Feinstein
Director of Conservation & Education

WELCOME
NEW
MEMBERS!

The GULL is the official newsletter of Golden Gate Audubon Society. As a supporting member of Golden Gate Audubon, you receive a subscription to *The GULL*, a 10 percent discount on all items purchased at our nature store, access to field trips and programs, and the opportunity to volunteer. Local members of the National Audubon Society automatically receive *The GULL*. Not a member yet? Contact our office at 510.843.2222 for details.

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